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Hooks Says Public TV Neglects the Masses

WASHINGTON. — (AP) — The public television system has been accused of racial prejudice by the first black member of the Federal Communications Commission.

"Public television, without the legal or moral right to do so, has become the Caucasian intellectual's home entertainment game," said Commissioner Ben L. Hooks, a former Memphis judge.

His comments came in a sharp dissent from an FCC decision rejecting discrimination charges against WNET of New York City.

It was the second dissent in a week by Hooks accusing broadcasters of racial discrimination. In the other case he accused the networks of discriminating against black college football and basketball teams.

In the public television case, he said that "by styling itself, preponderantly, as an electronic Harvard liberal arts course, public broadcasting has forsaken those less privileged and influential whose cultural and educational needs are far more on a 'street academy' or community college scale."

"... It throws these disadvantaged people a few token bones and, aloofly, turns its back, not wanting to mingle with the masses."

The WNET-TV case centered on charges by the Puerto Rican Media Action and Educational Council against the Educational Broadcasting Corp., owner of the station which broadcasts from Newark, N.J., but has studios in New York City.

The council, a nonprofit New York corporation, called for revocation of WNET's license and denial of a 1975 renewal because of allegations that WNET-TV discriminated against Hispanics, Latinos and Spanish-surnamed Americans in its programming and employment practices.

In a 6-1 ruling the FCC said the council provided no statistical evidence to support the assertion that Hispanics residing in the WNET-TV service area are predominantly Spanish-speaking.